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Extensive Damage to Marlborough Apartment Building

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Marlborough Fire Chief James Fortin have concluded their investigation in the April 23 fire at 273 West Main Street in Marlborough. Fire Marshal Coan said, "There is no indication that the fire was intentionally-set but damage to the building is so extensive that the investigative team is not able to conclusively determine the cause of the fire."

Chief Fortin said, "The very area where investigators believe the fire started, the attic, has been completely burned away." The attic contained individual storage units for each apartment, which combined with the wood framing in the attic, led to a very heavy fuel load.

Coan said, "The fire quickly took hold of the building and without a sprinkler system to help contain it, the damage was significant. When the building was built, no fire sprinklers were required to be installed, but if this same building were built today they would be."

Chief Fortin said, "It is extremely fortunate that no one was injured in this fire. I believe the fact that it occurred during the daytime when people were awake, the fire alarm system worked, and people responded correctly by leaving the building, made the difference in life safety."

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the Marlborough Fire Department, Marlborough Police Department, state police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and agents from the federal Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Massachusetts uses the "team concept" of fire investigation and it is not unusual for the ATF to assist in large fire investigations.

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